

THE EFFECT OF ENGLISH FLUENCY UPON JOB SEEKING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to reveal whether there is association between English fluency of newly graduated bachelor programs, being measured by their TOEFL score and the waiting time to obtain their first jobs after graduation day. One hundred and twenty fresh graduate of a private university in Depok, West Java, Indonesia who were willing to participate in the study were tested to obtain their TOEFL score and instructed to report their waiting time until they get their first jobs. Mean of their TOEFL score was 443.6 (95% CI: 434.3,453.0), while the mean of waiting time was 50.8 days (95% CI: 45.2,56.3). In the linear regression analysis, TOEFL score was shown as a statistically significant predictor for the waiting time ($p < 0.00$). It is concluded that English fluency is of prime importance for fresh bachelor program graduates in Indonesia to facilitate their job seeking task.

KEYWORDS: Bachelor, English Fluency, TOEFL Score, Waiting Time

INTRODUCTION

English has been the most significant language in the world. It is an international language that became one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. As an international language, it is read, spoken and written in many countries. It is used as a tool to break down language barriers existing among people of different races, cultures and nationalities. Nowadays, it becomes more and more popular in the world. It attracts the attention of people due to the interestingness in its tune and structure. In addition, it is studied and understood by many of the world population because of its two important benefits, i.e. as a tool for communication and to create a greater opportunity for a job.

The great importance of English is that it creates a greater opportunity for jobs. It will be easier for people in seeking job by having fluency in English (Marcelo, 2010). Factually, in this modern world, businesses are targeting at qualities of employees; thus, knowing English is one of those qualities. Nowadays, many jobs require workers to speak English proficiently. Types of jobs that have the requirements are not usual jobs. If people know English and good at it, they will have more chances to get good job or even better job. It is not surprising that many people say that English can bring people to a bright future. However, mastering English is not easy. There are two important things that must be considered in learning it, those are seriousness and patience.

People already have the idea that the person who had done masters in English literature has the ability to speak English smoothly. Factually, the fact does not always say the same. In fact, most of them are unemployed because they do not have the ability to speak English fluently. That becomes a main reason of their unemployment. Employers built an expectation that the candidates with masters in English will be capable for speaking English fluently but when they are interviewed, they feel very sorry that the candidate is not able to speak English fluently and as a result, the candidate loses the job. In this era of globalization, the ability to speak English is a must in order to be able to compete in seeking job (Crystal, 2003). This applied not only to those who study the literature, but also those who study other sciences.

Nowadays, people think that English proficiency is crucial in seeking job. It has a significant role in the career world. Various professions have regarded it as the main skills to promote qualification. For them, English is not a new claim, but rather a necessity. It has become an important part in the field of business throughout the world. In other words, it has served as an important tool for communication and interaction among business people with different cultural backgrounds and nationalities. Most international business transactions, including emails, memos, reports and contracts, are written in English.

Although essential for career, English proficiency in Indonesia seems still relatively low. In general, a success that achieved by someone starts from a dream which is further supported by the hard skills and soft skills in the process. English is a part of soft skills. In Indonesia, people only focus on the hard skills and the ability to speak and communicate in the components that contained in soft skill is ignored.

The objective of this study is to elaborate whether there is any association between the English fluency and waiting time to get the first job in the newly graduates of university bachelor programs.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study was conducted in Indonesia in 2012. We collected the willing participants among those who were preparing to undergo their bachelor graduation ceremony in the Computer Science, Economics, Engineering, and Psychology Departments of a private university in Depok, West Java, Indonesia. Some basic demographic and educational data were obtained from those who were ready to participate in the study. The graduates who were already employed were excluded from the study, as well as those who do not intend to seek a job promptly after their graduation day. We also excluded those who needed 7 years or more to finish his/her baccalaureate program.

English fluency is approximated by TOEFL Prediction score, while job seeking variable is measured by waiting time in days since the graduation day to obtain the first job. The eligible participants then had to undergo TOEFL Prediction test to obtain their individual prediction scores. After their graduation day, the participants were instructed to report as soon as possible if they were accepted for their first employment.

The notional association between TOEFL Prediction Score and waiting time for the first job were analyzed in linear regression method, using STATA 13, a statistical computer program.

RESULTS

The sample consisted of 120 respondents, graduated from university bachelor programs in 2012. Some characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 1. Seventy four (61.7%) of them were males and 46 others (38.3%) were females. Respondent age at graduation day ranged from 21 to 31 with mean of 24.8 years and 95% confidence interval of [24.4; 25.1]. Most of the respondents (79.2%) were graduated from Computer Science and Economic Departments.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Respondents of the Study

| Characteristic | N | % |
|------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Sex | | |
| Male | 74 | 61.7 |
| Female | 46 | 38.3 |
| Age at graduation (in years) | | |
| 21–23 | 35 | 29.2 |
| 24–26 | 61 | 50.8 |
| > 26 | 24 | 20.0 |
| Study Department | | |
| Computer Science | 59 | 49.2 |
| Economics | 36 | 30.0 |
| Engineering | 17 | 14.2 |
| Psychology | 8 | 6.7 |
| TOEFL Predicted Score | | |
| < 400 | 30 | 25.0 |
| 400–449 | 41 | 34.2 |
| 450–499 | 24 | 20.0 |
| ≥ 500 | 25 | 20.8 |
| Total | 120 | 100% |

Statistical values of the two main variable in the study, i.e. waiting time and TOEFL Prediction scores are shown in Table 2. The lowest TOEFL Prediction score was 372, whereas the highest one was 550. Mean TOEFL score was 443.6 with 95% confidence interval of [434.3 ; 453.0]. Waiting time ranged from 2 to 100 days after graduation day, with mean of 50.8 days and 95% confidence interval of [45.2 ; 56.3].

Table 2: Statistical Values of the Main Variables in the Study

| Variable | Mean | SD | N | Min | Max | 95% Conf. Interval | |
|----------|--------|-------|-----|-----|-----|--------------------|--------|
| wait* | 50.76 | 30.55 | 120 | 2 | 100 | 45.24 | 56.28 |
| TOEFL** | 443.64 | 51.91 | 120 | 372 | 550 | 434.26 | 453.02 |

* Waiting time (in days); ** TOEFL Prediction score

Next, we regress waiting time on TOEFL Prediction score. The results can be seen in Table 3 and Table 4. Regression analysis results showed that TOEFL Prediction score is a statistically significant predictor ($p < 0.00$) of respondent waiting time to obtain his/her first job after graduation.

Table 3: Table of Analysis of Variance for Regression of Waiting Time on TOEFL Prediction Score

| Source | Sum of Square | df | Mean Square | | N = 120 | |
|--------------|------------------|------------|---------------|--|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Model | 57551.54 | 1 | 57551.54 | | $F_{(1;118)} = 126.99$ | $p = 0.00$ |
| Residual | 53476.45 | 118 | 453.19 | | $R^2 = 0.52$ | $adj - R^2 = 0.51$ |
| Total | 111027.99 | 119 | 933.01 | | Root MSE = 21.29 | |

Table 4: Predictor Significance Test in Regression of Waiting Time on TOEFL Prediction Score

| Wait* | Coefficient | Stand Err | t | p | 95% Conf. Interval | |
|----------|-------------|-----------|--------|------|--------------------|--------|
| toefl** | -0.42 | 0.38 | -11.27 | 0.00 | -0.50 | -0.35 |
| constant | 238.72 | 16.79 | 14.22 | 0.00 | 205.46 | 271.97 |

* Waiting time; ** TOEFL Prediction score

DISCUSSIONS

At this time, English is referred as international language and also as a secondary language of many countries in the world. Through that fact, people unconsciously recognize the importance of English for communication. Currently, there are more than one hundred countries in the world that use English (Neeley, 2012). Function of English as the secondary language plays an important role in this global era. When someone knows English, he/she can communicate with many people including citizens of countries in this globe, without any confusion in expressing feelings and thoughts.

Mean of waiting time in this study is 50.8 days. Other study by Putranto and Mashuri (2012) showed the mean of job waiting time for fresh bachelor graduate of Statistical Department in Surabaya, Indonesia is 5 months. However, the job seeking environment in Surabaya may be different from Jakarta. Furthermore, the study sample of Putranto and Mashuri also came from different department.

Our study results showed that English fluency, approximated by TOEFL Prediction score is a statistically significant predictor of job seeking, which is approximated by waiting time. It was also showed that all of the respondents did not find considerable obstacle in job seeking and obtain their first job within relatively short period, i.e. less than 100 days. However, the mean TOEFL Prediction score of 443.64 showed that English mastering of the newly graduates of university bachelor programs is not very good, moreover 25% of them have the score less than 400.

There are many countries that use English as secondary language, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. Most of them use it in the process of teaching and communication in daily life. Unfortunately, this is still not fully applicable in our country, Indonesia. English is a language that is rarely used in Indonesia. Most people in Indonesia still use the local language as their second language. For example, students in rural areas get a different way of learning with students in urban areas. Schools in urban areas in Jakarta, use bilingual system for their learning process. They use both Indonesian and English. The students are socialized to use English, both from the books and to communicate in the school environment.

On the contrary, students in rural areas are very difficult to get a lesson about English. The different facility makes the students in rural areas become a bit behind. It is a fact that should be changed because a great nation should have a next generation that able competing globally. English is the most appropriate way for entering the global world.

The nature of language learning is learning to communicate. Communication is an important thing that humans need for society. Humans cannot live alone and depend on each other. The most effective way of communication is through language. Language is always very important because it is the means of communication. If someone cannot speak the language of a place, it will be very difficult for him/her to communicate with people. People communicate with others every day. Communication is a tool for everyday life. Everyone uses it every day. Language makes it a whole lot easier, so everyone learns to speak their native language. People from diverse backgrounds geography, religion and culture have been put together by an internationally agreed language to communicate with each other, namely English.

English is an international language that is needed in the world of technology. It will be good for everyone to know English in order to study any subject of science or any computer language. People need to know English to communicate effectively with developed countries. It is necessary in each and every field. If people know English, they will not feel a tongue tie in front of others. They take pride in speaking English. If they do not know English, they will get left behind the others. Today, everyone cannot deny the importance of English. If he/she knows how to speak English,

it will be an invaluable tool of communication. It can develop people's knowledge. As long as people educate themselves, they will come across many new things.

Speak English with someone in everyday life is the easiest and fastest way to improve English skills. The first base of the tool is to speak simple English sentences in order to build confidence. Once someone thinks that he/she can now speak English without making a mistake, then he/she should try to add his/her vocabulary. After improving vocabularies, he/she should pay attention to his/her accent. People should not pay attention towards their accents at the start of learning English because it can affect the learning process. However, if their English are better and they are fluent enough in their speaking and writing English, then they can start applying jobs on competent companies and will for sure get hired easily.

In general, there are many benefits to be gained from learning English. However, the concept of Indonesian society thinks today about the benefits of the English is limited. Many Indonesian think that English is only a part of lessons in school. In Indonesia, English being one of the lessons in the curriculum that used as one of the national exams. There are many students who still think that English is difficult and boring subject. This happens because the students are not accustomed to dealing with it in the daily basis.

It is undeniable that the progress of life is about to get connected to each other. Language is the easiest way for communicating each other. English has become the *lingua franca* of the world. Mastering foreign languages is a good thing for people, but it will seem useless for them if they do not master English. There are many different companies all over the world. There are many foreign companies in our country, Indonesia. The language that surely someone must be mastered is English. Then, second language that can be controlled depend on the origin of the company location. English is necessary for people to apply for a job. In fact, many important positions in leading companies in cities occupied by foreigners. Good English skills can boost one's career. Someone can get a better position if he/she can communicate with various people in company using English, especially the boss. He/she will get that position if he/she able to create innovation for the company and deliver the idea by a great communication.

English proficiency in Indonesia is still low. According to the report of Educational First (2012), a world-scaled private educational company, the English Proficiency Index of Indonesia was ranked as the 27th among 54 countries to be evaluated, which was classified as low proficiency. As reported in *Kompas.com*, educational institutions world English First (EF) announced the first comprehensive report on English proficiency index or EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) in 44 countries. Indonesia is one of them. EF EPI is an index derived from comparing the English skills of adults in different countries. Shortly, based on the data for the three years (2007-2009), the English proficiency of Indonesian society was ranked in 34th place.

Factually, being smart and intelligent is not enough to compete in the working world. People need something that qualified them in order to get bright future. The only way to get it, is they need to succeed in seeking job. It is beyond doubt that requests of companies for candidate who can speak English and have good communication skills are getting higher year by year. It happens in all over countries. In fact, English skills are not just limited to people who work in the company. For those who are interested in entrepreneurship, they are also still needed and cannot be ignored.

English can bring people to a bright future along with technological developments. Everyone cannot deny the importance of English in this modern world. This language helps us to express thinking and feeling, to talk, to exchange

views, and to contract between people wherever they live though. Furthermore, in the world that English is considered as the main language, English is now taking an important part in the chance to take a job. Hence, everyone can predict that English will continue to develop and bring us more advantages in the near future.

It would be better for students who graduate to know the importance of English for their job prospects. With beautiful dreams and high spirits, the students should have goals for their future. They have to set their own goals, and work towards achieving them. However, the ultimate goal should not only just attain a good post with good salary in a reputed company, but also creating perfection in life. In the real world, the only medium of communication is English, since it is universal.

CONCLUSIONS

It does not seem difficult for the newly graduated bachelors in Indonesia to obtain their first job within relatively short period. All of the respondents obtained their first job within less than 100 days (95% CI of their waiting time is 45-56 days), although their English mastering is not very good (95% CI of their TOEFL Prediction score 434-453). However, those with higher TOEFL Prediction score underwent shorter waiting time before obtaining their first job. It showed that English fluency is of very importance for fresh bachelor program graduates in Indonesia to facilitate their job seeking task.

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